BOOK REVIEW
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How Well Did We Know About Our Communication? *"Origins of Human Communication"*

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Through accurate observation and the results of experimental studies using great apes, the author tells us exactly what we have not known about human communication. The author persuasively conveys to the reader the grand history of developing from great apes' gestures to human gestures, to human speech. Given that great apes and human gestures were the origin of human voice language, we have once again realized that our language is, after all, an "embodied language."

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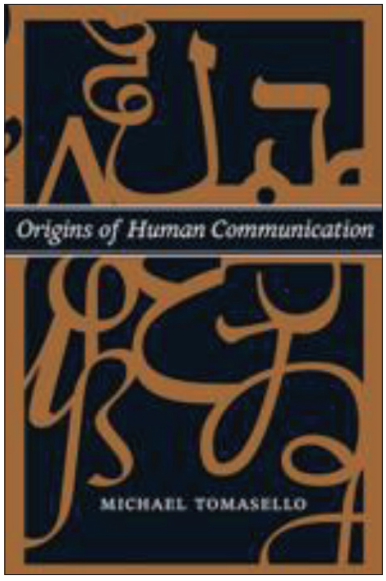

There was a time when I belatedly learned that my intention, which I thought I had delivered well after thinking well, was not adequately conveyed to the other person. Meanwhile, there are times when I am surprised that my colleague approached me and comforted me about the stress I experienced today by looking at my posture or facial expression. Why is communication so difficult? Also, why is it so unexpectedly easy?

Several scholars have dealt with the characteristics of human communication in their books. Of course, I also received a lot of help from such books. Perhaps the authors who studied human communication only within the characteristics of the species of humans have a narrow view, so they also looked at the research of scholars who studied the communication characteristics of great apes living in groups similar to humans. Meanwhile, through this book that I received from a respected individual, I realized how narrow my perspective on human communication has been. Michael Tomasello, author of the book, is a leading developmental and comparative psychologist and linguist. To the point where it is difficult to explain his major in a word, his specialty is vast. In particular, his theoretical hypothesis has been continuously proven by directly experimenting with spatial, instrumental, and social cognition of infants, young children and great apes. This book, "Origins of Human Communication" [1], describes the longitudinal and evolutionary processes of various areas of human social communication.

How much do we really know about primates, and also about great apes? I think those who read this book may have experienced the disappearance of our preconceptions from the beginning of this book. Primates were known as social animals and expected that either the alarming call or vocal call would share many meanings for their peers, but in actual observation and experiments performed by Tomasello and colleagues, the alarming calls and vocal calls are quite limited in terms of social meaning! Rather, the author finds the origin of human language in the "gestures" of great apes.

In other words, "intention-movement" (for example, arm-raise or touch-back) had given rise to human iconic gestures or pantomiming, which later developed into content words such as verbs or nouns. On the other hand, it is argued that "attention-getter" (for example, ground-slap or throw-stuff) had given rise to human pointing, which eventually developed into demonstratives or deictics indicating places.

In particular, among the two large classifications of human gestures, the importance of pointing is very great. Eventually, pointing can allow external 'referent' to be used while simultaneously creating a triangular relationship among the communicator, referent, and recipient. Among the three communication functions (requesting, informing, and sharing) of infants that are the results of intersubjective relationship between communicator and recipient, I realized how important the 'informing' function is. We always emphasize social reference and joint attention, but the importance of this informing function has been always obscured by the halo of joint attention. It was deeply imprinted on me that infants and toddlers can also use pointing as an informing function to the recipient, and that the ultimate purpose is to obtain good reputation.

In fact, a similar explanation has recently been made on the reason for the emergence of another similar topic, imitation. What is known as an important function of imitation from the past to the present was that it is possible to understand and sympathize with the actions and emotions of others by simulating the actions of others through imitation. Recently, however, the "Social Top-Down Response Modulation (STORM) theory" [2], which imitates other people's actions and gives them information that they imitate you, and eventually gains recognition from others, has been quite convincing.

This recognition of others and the advantage of gaining a good reputation are greater in voice rather than gesture, and eventually human voice begins to assume a major language position that replaces gestures. The author describes it as a "drift to the arbitrary."

However, in my opinion, considering that human voice language was not directly created from the fixed vocal call of great apes, but the process by which great ape gestures have been replaced by human voice language through human gestures, human voice language does not arbitrarily replace human bodies and gestures, but there is an inevitability that cannot but originate from gestures.

In recent cognitive science, language has also begun to become a mainstream theory of "embodied language cognition", that is, language is also viewed as a result of the human body's interaction with the surrounding environment. For example, in the process of listening and understanding body part-related words, activation of the pre-motor cortex as well as the superior temporal gyrus (the area of language understanding) of the brain occurred [3]. Also, in one experiment, the subject pressed the button in front of her body only when the sentence she heard was grammatically correct. At this time, when the sentence was indicated with a movement away from the body, the pressing speed was faster under the condition that the button located farther from the body was pressed than under the condition that the button near the body was pressed [4]. From the point of view of this conciliatory embodied cognition, human speech is an inevitable relationship, not arbitrary, with the human body.

Another thing the author wants to emphasize in this book is that the development of human gestures and voice languages has a purpose to communicate in cooperation with each other, unlike great apes, which appears as the emergence of common ground and joint intention in communication. Therefore, as the sentences used became more sophisticated, the grammar for informing was developed to a higher level. In particular, narratives and relative clauses have developed to record time and connect events to each other, and to track accurate referents in the continuous flow of events. Finally, the use of language for joint intention developed not only for both the communicator and recipient, but also for collective intention within society.

In conclusion, this book will present a new perspective to readers who want to find out the fundamental aspects of human language development. In particular, it is a must-recommended book for those majoring in child and adolescent psychiatry, child and adolescent developmental psychology, and so on. I recommend this book to readers who want to know how important the collaborative purpose is reflected in the communication behavior we unconsciously and automatically share, and how much the voice language we are familiar with has contributed to embodied gestures such as body-language that have actually developed much after passing through primates to humans.

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